

Air Force is far better than it ever was

First CMSAF compares past, present enlisted force

by Paul W. Airey

Retired Chief Master Sgt. of the Air Force

TYNDALL AIR FORCE BASE, Fla. (AFPN) — There is a tendency for many of us to look back and see what has happened or transpired during the course of a year. Rather than looking back on the past year, I want to look back 57 years to 1942, when I first enlisted in the United States Army Air Force.

My active-duty service encompassed three wars, the Berlin airlift, the Cuban missile crisis and many years of the Cold War with the Soviet bloc.

I'm mentioning this for more reasons than to reminisce about the past; I'd like to compare the Air Force of yesterday to the Air Force of today. I'll skip over the fantastic advances we've made in space, weapons systems and hardware and stick to the people — still the Air Force's most valuable asset.

In the late 1940s, two significant events took place. In 1947, President Harry S. Truman signed the National Security Act, allowing the Air Force to become a separate branch of the service. Shortly thereafter, in 1948, segregation in the armed forces ended. These two events opened doors and created opportunities that many people never dreamt possible — they gave us a better-rounded noncommissioned officer corps.

I am amazed at the educational level of today's enlisted airmen. It's easy to equate the enlisted force of today to the officer corps I knew in World

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War II. We now have NCOs and airmen performing duties historically done by officers. In addition, the majority of officers in the 1940s did not have degrees; many of today's airmen do -- a testament to the dedication and opportunities afforded to today's force.

The outstanding training we give as a result of professional military education has also done a lot to make the enlisted force what it is today. Young airmen with an average of five years in service are given management and leadership training that often far exceeds that provided in the civilian sector. Along with this, we have a remarkable enlisted promotion system. A system that's been in effect for more than 30 years with only minor changes.

Of course, there is no segment of our military society that has made more progress than women in the armed forces. I remember the days of the Women's Army Auxiliary and the Women's Army Corps. Women in the Air Force today are full-fledged members of our great service; standing right alongside their male counterparts.

We've also made great leaps in quality-of-life issues. Never in my wildest dreams did I foresee a day when all airmen who live on base would have their own dorm rooms.

Other quality-of-life additions such as the creation of family support centers, child development centers, better family quarters and unique travel opportunities have contributed to what recruiters call "a great way of life."

I realize there are many frustrations that today's airmen deal with; problems such as constant rotations, single parenting and family separations. However, these frustrations are a fact of life and have always been present.

I firmly believe the Air Force of today is far better than it was 50, 20 or even 10 years ago. I also have no doubt that the Air Force of the future will still offer a rewarding career for those who are willing to accept the challenges. I look forward to seeing many more enlisted breakthroughs as we head into the future, such as the first enlisted person in space.

Our country and our Air Force will always need dedicated, patriotic airmen who are willing to place their duties ahead of their personal likes and desires. We have always had people like that and I know we always will.

(Editors note: Paul W. Airey was the first chief master sergeant of the Air Force. He served in that position from April 1967 to July 1969. He retired from active duty Aug. 1, 1970.)

Action Line

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outdated refill computer.

I am happy to inform you that the need to replace this dated equipment with new technology has been identified, approved, and funded. Currently, contracting personnel are coordinating the purchase and installation of the new system.

Rest assured that the 437th Medical Group is expeditiously working this issue so that we may provide our patients uninterrupted pharmacy service. Please feel free to contact our pharmacist at (843) 963-6809, if you have any further questions or concerns.

Callers are encouraged to leave their name and phone number so we can provide a personal reply. Remember the easiest way to resolve problems is to call the agency responsible directly or to use your chain of command.

Here are some commonly used phone numbers:

Security Forces.....	963-3600
Base Exchange.....	552-5000
Commissary.....	963-5695
Housing Office.....	963-3859
Medical Group Information.....	963-6700
Family Support Center	963-4406
Education Office	963-4573
Charleston Club	963-3914
Fitness and Sports Center	963-3347
TRICARE.....	1-800-444-5445
TRICARE Claims.....	1-800-403-3950

Discipline from the NCO perspective

Don't 'look the other way;' lead by example to instill a sense of pride in airmen

By Staff Sgt. Dennis Jones
437th Security Forces Squadron

Retention has become one of the biggest challenges in today's Air Force. From the Pentagon to wing commanders, leaders at every level are looking for the solution to raising retention rates.

The problem has been examined from many perspectives: money, type of recruits, and expectations held by new airmen. Mid-level supervisors being closest to the youngest troops are, perhaps, better able to address this issue.

Ask yourself, "Why did I enlist in the Air Force?" For many the resounding answer is discipline.

Most of us joined seeking some form of structure and discipline, or heard our parents or grandparents say, "Joining the military was the best thing I ever did. I received the best discipline I could have ever asked for."

Ladies and gentlemen, our young airmen are not receiving the level of discipline they expected when they joined the Air Force.

Ask a few first-term airmen if their expectation of a high level of discipline has been met. It is likely you will discover that many airmen find discipline to be too relaxed.

Now is the time to look inward, as non-commissioned officers and supervisors, and find the fix. By performing our most basic responsibility as NCOs, leading by example, we help to instill a sense of pride and discipline in most airmen. NCOs who are not afraid to say no and not afraid to correct a discrepancy on the spot are the ones who really make a positive impact.

Too many of us turn the other way when an infraction is witnessed, get too friendly with our troops or just don't care. When we turn the other way, we tell the airmen it's okay not to follow the rules and lower the discipline standard a little more.

Just as children test the enforceability of a rule in the home, our airmen want to know which rules and regulations are important and must be adhered to with the strictest of consistency.

We all know the standards, as defined in Air Force Instructions, but there are still folks out there who have to make "sure" it is really necessary to comply with them.

When NCOs look the other way, they sacrifice discipline for convenience. The personal satisfaction in

directing a young troop down the right path can last a lifetime. Discipline does not have to be negative and, when presented through example, our airmen will be more eager and willing to change their behavior and follow the supervisor's lead.

Airmen today are more educated and experienced than when most NCOs enlisted, and they will question the validity of standards and regulations. It is human nature to take the path of least resistance, often at the expense of superior performance and conformity.

Airmen want and need to know the limits and how far they can push before being corrected. Our airmen want to know the mission of the workcenter, squadron, and wing. They need direction in their new Air Force lives, just as we did when we started. It is our responsibility as NCOs to ensure they are given that direction.

NCOs have a proud heritage and have stood the test of time during peace and war. NCOs have been and always will be the backbone of the Air Force.

If we want our country to remain strong and secure, then we have to train our airmen to be tomorrow's great leaders. We are the ones who have to take the Air Force into the new millennium.